



Globalisation and Teaching of English in India

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ABSTRACT

English is an international language. Yes, years after years we all have been revising this sentence. But still we face tremendous problems in teaching and learning English. English is a second language for the non-native speakers, and of course their first language is their mother tongue. Teaching English as a second language at the primary level becomes quite difficult in a country like India because the teachers have to deal with the mother tongue of the child first and then has to teach English as a second language. The primary school years are a period of rapid expansion and refinement of language capability. Children acquire their mother tongue with its dialect but we have to teach them the second language that is English in a standard form.

English language teaching is not an easy task now-a-days not for the primary level or for the higher level. The reason is we are living in the era of globalisation. It is an important phenomenon that is closely related to the spread of the English language. Globalisation has far reaching consequences for languages. Johnson and Fischer (1999) point out that in our globalising world, languages are no longer tied to or associated exclusively with discrete territorial areas or single nation states. Indeed, languages along with "goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, communications, crime, culture, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs", also "readily flow across territorial boundaries" (Mc Grew, 1992 p.65-66). This applies especially to English. English obtained its position at the core of the global language system due to a variety of historical reasons, namely "large scale migration and settlement of native language speakers, military imposition (Colonialism), commercial or political power and prestige derived from scientific, cultural or other achievements" (Leitner, 1992, p.186). English is now the main language of books, newspapers, academic conferences, science, technology, international business and medicine, and has official or special status in over 70 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

In order to make the children self-sufficient regarding English language and to survive strongly in globalisation the present paper focuses on ways of teaching English as a second language at the primary level with special reference to Indian students.

Introduction

The objective in any language classroom is to get the learners to learn the target language and use it. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are the four skills of any language which has to be acquired or learnt while learning a particular language. The problems of non-native learners of English are quite different from the native learners of English. There are number of special needs and learning problems which the teacher must be aware of, if he is to effectively guide non-native speakers towards successful school achievement;

1. **Cultural Values** :- It is especially important that the teacher of non-native speaker students develop sensitivities to the cultural values of the children he teaches. Too many teachers are inadequately prepared to understand or accept these dissimilar cultural values. To teach these primary students, the teacher must be cognizant of these differences and must above all else seek to understand those ideas, values and practices different from his own.

Following are the significant areas to be considered by the teacher in working with non-native primary students,

a. **Level of aspiration** :- Progress in learning in the school situation is contingent upon goal setting which is both challenging and realistic. The child should be helped to set goals which are within his grasp but which are also rewarding in terms of effortful achievement.

b. **Socialization** :- Children may come from the environments in which the practical social amenities necessary for harmonious interaction with others or for appropriate behaviour in school have not been acquired. It is the responsibility of the teacher to develop social skills such as sharing, taking turns and respecting others among the primary students.

c. **Sense of personal worth** :- The teacher can assist in developing children's ego strengths through encouragement and sincere praise. It is especially important that he maintains a happy, relaxed school atmosphere-one in which children are free to converse, to enjoy and share experiences, to the English language and to make mistakes and correct them. It is important for the teacher to see that the child must learn to use standard English in certain situations.

d. **Language** :- Before the non-native speakers or primary students can learn to read English, they must be able to understand and speak it effectively. Reading ability is negatively affected by meagre backgrounds of experience, concepts and general information. Although a child may be able to recognize words on the printed page, the words will be meaningless if the child does not know what concepts they represent. Thus the teacher must provide an educational programme containing a variety of experiences and the mediation essential to help children acquire meaningful concepts.

Auditory discrimination ability correlates significantly with success in learning to read, as children must be familiar with speech sounds before they can master the symbols used to represent them on the printed page. Therefore they must be immersed in the speech sounds they are to acquire. They must be given opportunities to imitate adequate speech models and be assisted when speech sounds are not prevailed or pronounced correctly.

2. **Vocabulary development** :- The non-native speaker's vocabulary may be inadequate because concepts which he has developed may also have labels or names which are unique within his own culture. Therefore this child who has a restricted English vocabulary must be provided with a variety of meaningful experiences where new English words and their meanings are communicated with clarity and precision.

f. **Syntax** :- To help the child acquire the patterns of speech of the English language, the teacher must provide many opportunities for him to hear and use English in various situations such as listening to stories, singing songs, memorizing poems or lines from plays and participating in choral reading. A recorder should be used to record the child's speech so that his individual linguistic needs may be analyzed.

Teaching Methods for Reading

The teacher should develop a bond of trust and friendship with the students. He should provide books in the classroom and display pictures and various artifacts related to the cultural heritage of the child in order to reinforce self identification. Non-native speakers of English will be able to succeed in learning to read English only when they have developed good listening and speaking abilities in the English language.

Storytelling :- It is a means for children to share personal experiences and stories they have read or heard. Therefore they should be provided with adequate story books.

Linking Oral Language and Reading :- If the children are lacking in reading experiences at home, the teacher may find the language experience approach an effective one in launching the children into formal reading. In this approach the children dictate from their own experience those things of interest to them and which they may wish to share with others. Language is something you understand and say before it is something you read and write.

Meaningful Content :- Too often when the non-native speaker of English begins learning to read, he is thrust into reading materials with content that he cannot relate to or has no meaning for him. This results in lack of motivation to read on the part of the child. When the language experience approach is used, since the content is the child's actual experiences which have been of interest to him, what he reads is certain to be meaningful and stimulating. Children must learn to read by structures if they are to master the skills involved in the act of reading. Reading materials must be sequenced so that they enable the learner to achieve success as he progresses through the materials. One of the best ways to extend children's experiences with words is through reading aloud to them from the best that children's literature has to offer. Content should be relevant and meaningful for the children with whom it is to be used. Phonological and structural patterns used in the content should be within the children's speech repertoire. Vocabulary control should not be so rigid as to stultify content and destroy the children's interest in reading. A variety of exercises and activities should be provided for meeting the needs of the children in the development of their basic reading skills and for extending their reading experiences.

Teaching methods for Writing

Learning to write not only parallels the process of learning to talk; it is largely dependent on oral language development. Children write what they hear in the language environment around them. Their written vocabulary develops out of the oral vocabulary; the words for which they have acquired meaning. The classroom where textbooks and workbooks are the sole materials and only written language is stressed is likely to be barren and unproductive. On the other hand, a classroom rich in language experiences, such as storytelling, drama, discussion, interviewing, group planning, reader theatre and word play, provides the kind of environment necessary for continued language development, including written language development. It is as Templeton Says : "Knowledge of word structure is not learned by planned, imposed exercises; rather it is built, modified and accommodated through the assimilation of many experiences" (1980).

It appears that writing develops naturally along with the development of the other language arts. Just as children participate in the world of oral language with early attempts such as babbling and single word utterances, they also begin to notice writing and move from random scribbles to directional scribbles. From this beginning, they discover how to make letters, usually first trying the letters of their name or copying a word from some noticeable place, such as a cereal box. As they progress, children discover that letters stand for sounds, and they will then use invented spellings to write on their own, if not discouraged by teachers or adult standards. Children will learn to spell correctly, and to write fluently if they are encouraged, but not forced to express themselves in writing as soon as they feel the urge, and as best as they can.

Teaching methods for listening

The more the students hear natural spoken English, the better, the teacher must seize every opportunity to offer plenty of natural input to enhance the listening competence of the learners. Learners need to practice listening in order to get engaged in interactional activities. In the case of primary students the total Physical Response method is very useful. Here, the children say nothing, they listen and do. Children obey an instruction or a chain of instructions and the teacher watches it to check if they do it correctly.

The teacher can read out some telephone numbers or addresses or secret messages and children write them down. At the later stages, many other activities can be organized in the class. Gaps are left in short passages and students are to fill in the gaps. This is an electronic age, even interviews are conducted over the phone. Aural / oral work must be done at all stages. The electronic media is reviving the oral tradition. Activities like spotting the differences in the two versions of a passage, arranging sentences that are read in a jumbled up order, listing items, listening to recitation of poems and recorded speeches,

taking down notes when a passage is read, listening to radio broadcasts and such other activities can be organized to build up the listening competence of the students.

Teaching methods for speaking

Both adults and children play with language and with literary form. The humans need to "self entertain" through play, in this case language and literary play has aided the development of literature and continues to aid in the language development of the children. The act of speaking is the act of playing a game with language, literary form and human behaviour as objects of the play. Primitive forms of language / literary games consist principally of repetitious play with the features of the language itself. Songs, singing games and language play give an opportunity to the children for active involvement with speaking English and they learn to control language and develop increasingly sophisticated expectations of the behaviours of language and literary forms. The abundant varieties of language play games literary form and content games available in oral literature present a rich collection of language involve from which children can develop language and literary maturity. Continued repetition of the language and grammar can lead eventually to recognize and speak the language in a proper sense. Songs and stories can be sorted into roughly defined categories of play type. These categories can then be used to aid in the selection of appropriate literary play and language development experiences for children. Tongue-twisters, humorous add- ones and memory sequences that can also be adapted to dramatic play appeal to children. Songs that tell whole stories introduce children to play with plot and to repetition of language forms which manage to contain story line within the structural restrictions of song cadence. Play within story is often identical to that within song or singing game.

Practice, practice and practice is the only way to learn spoken English, therefore the teacher should give tremendous and regular practice to the primary students of speaking in English The students should be taught to produce meaningful sounds in meaningful chunks. They should be able to speak English in syntactically acceptable pattern forms. They should be taught to produce language using proper stress, rhythm and intonation. They should be taught to convey the information properly and should be taught to formulate appropriate response. They should also be taught to articulate meaningful sounds to the objects which they see around themselves. A chart can be put up in the classroom where all the new words learnt are written. At the end of a week or fortnight, the teacher can do a brief revision exercise. Rhyming and chanting is also very enjoyable and helpful to learn to speak in English.

Conclusion

In order to teach reasonably good Standard English, the teacher should make a conscious effort to learn and use fairly acceptable pronunciation since the teacher's English is the model for the learners. Secondly, the teacher should have a good knowledge of the elements of spoken English and English phonetics and must be in a position to refer to books and dictionaries that give information on the proper pronunciation of English.

What is the standard pronunciation in one's own speech as well as in teaching in the classroom is a difficult question in the linguistically complex situation in India. It will be almost impossible to teach our children the standard pronunciation of the native speaker of English, either British or American, even the Indian teacher of English may find it difficult to use the native pronunciation. Therefore what the teacher can do best is to aim at establishing proper intelligibility or comfortable comprehensibility in the speech of students at the level of production; at the level of reception our students may be exposed to the native accents - both British and American - by using recorded material in the classroom.

Listening and reading are relatively passive or receptive or perceptive in character and speaking and writing are more active or productive. In reality all the four skills interact with each other to produce the synergic effect called language, it is only for the sake of convenience of teaching and learning, we think of four divisions.

In the context of teaching English in India as a second language at the primary level, we have to prioritize the importance to be given to the four skills i.e. Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. The concept of library language emphasizes the importance of reading and writing. But, in the present day world, we find that communication skills are demanded for employment purposes all over the world, in information technology, in electronic media, in meeting people and in interviews (Sometimes, even over the phone called 'pone-interviews), communication skills, in speaking as well as in writing, are basic to social mobility and economic success. And we have to prepare our students at the primary level itself for all these challenges. And therefore the teachers of English should always be well prepared to mould the students of primary classes so as to build a strong nation i.e. India.

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